

“YOUR SONNY SILE...”

PART ONE: DOCUMENTS ONE THROUGH FOUR

THE LETTERS OF
CAPTAIN SILAS SOULE
D COMPANY
FIRST COLORADO VOLUNTEERS

DOCUMENT NUMBER ONE:

ADDRESSED TO COL. JAS. B. ABBOTT,
LAWRENCE, KANSAS



Dist. Ten, July 21st, '61

Old Friend,

You may thank your stars, Major, that you left this country when you did, for it is deader than it ever was, and has been ever since you left... The fact is Major, I am getting D--m sick of this God-forsaken place. There are very few lodes paying and but few mills running. I am still at work in the shop. I have carried it on myself for the last three months and have got so that I am quite a smith.... What is the show back there? Could I get a Leutenants commission in the army, or any thing of the kind? If I could, I would go back....

I don't think of any more that would interest you. Answer soon and direct to Missouri City, [Kansas].

Yours R.
Sile

DOCUMENT NUMBER TWO:

Dear Mother;

Camp Fillmore
June 2nd, 1864

I know you are worrying about me because I have not written for so long, but I have been getting out of the notion of writing and have been busy for the last month fixing up my papers and just as I got them fixed, my office was swept away by the flood and I lost every thing I had; papers, letters, Clothing and all. Wasn't I in luck? Blessed are the poor because they have nothing to lose. I am now in command of my Company. A hundred brave warriors. Ain't I proud? I am on my way to Fort Lyon. I do not know where I shall go from there. I may go to fight Indians. If I do, I will write first so you can be worrying while I am gone. I received a letter from Em a short time ago. She told me that you was going to stay a while in Bangor. I would send you some money in the mail, but am afraid to, as the Indians are bad along the road and may take the Coach. I will send some the first safe opportunity. One of my men was killed and two wounded in an Indian fight last week.

I don't know what more to write. There is nothing I know of that would interest you. I still suffer with pleasure. Give my love to all the folks and when you write let me know how you and the girls get along. If you need money &c. I have some claims in the mountains that I could have sold a few weeks ago for ten thousand dollars if I had been there. But if they are worth any thing, they are worth \$50,000.00. I think I can sell them for that much in a year from now if they work the mines as they have begun to, and they pay as well. Lewis Tappan sold some he had for \$500,000.00. Just half a million dollars. that was pretty good wasn't it? Who knows but we are rich. I own fifty mining Claims and there ought to be some good ones and if one of them is good, it is a fortune for any one. I will send you my photograph when I write again.

From your Sonny Sile

DOCUMENT NUMBER THREE:

Fort Lyon
June 17th, 1864

Dear Annie;

I have just received a letter from you and was very glad to hear from you. I am in command of my Company and like it very well. I have 94 men and get along very well with them. Fort Lyon is on the Arkansas River about 250 miles from Denver. I suppose you heard of the great flood we had in Denver. I was there. My office was in a large two story brick building. It was washed away and I did not save any thing, so you see I have been drove out as well as you. It was an awful flood. It took down churches and printing offices. In fact it washed away most a quarter of the city and drowned a number of men, women and children. We have had a good deal of rain this season. The Arkansas River is so high that it has come in the post and drove most of the Laundresses out. I don't know what I shall do this summer, but think we'll have some Indian fighting to do. Part of my Company had a fight with them a week or two ago. I lost 2 killed and 3 wounded. They killed about 20 Indians.

I have not been in any fight yet, but may have a chance soon. I don't know what to write that would interest you. I would send some money to you but am afraid the Indians will rob the Coach, but if you want money let me know and I will send some to you. I would like you to send some papers to me when you can. Em has not sent any for a long time. I got a letter from Mother last week or two ago and answered her. I have not had a letter from Will since he left Kansas. Give my love to all the folks. Tell them I would like to hear from them. I think I shall go to Maine to marry; so if you see any nice girls that want to be the wife of a Captain of a hundred Braves, tell them that I am the man they are looking for.

Sile

DOCUMENT NUMBER FOUR:

Fort Lyon, C.T.
July 16th, 1864

Dear Annie;

I just received a letter from you and was kinder glad to hear from you... I am in Fort Lyon on the Arkansas River. There are five Companies here besides one section of battery and the Regt'l Band. I have a good Company and get along first rate. Yesterday at Dress parade the Major Comdg Post had orders read to the Battallion complementing my Company on their military appearance and discipline, referring to them as an example for the troops at the Post. So you see I get along very well. I am the same boy, Annie, as I used for to be; in fact I imagine that I am only 17 years old. We have been expecting to be ordered into the field for the last month and are still expecting to go on an Indian campaign, I think I will like it better than laying at this Post, for it is as hot as Blazes and the mosquitos are very numerous and they have got in the habit of biting....

You and Mother write for me to be a Christian and not be wild &c., but the Army don't improve a fellow much in that respect and you know I never was much of a Christian, and am naturally wild, but I have seen so much of the world and are not much changed. I think there is not much danger of my spoiling -- our Col. is a Methodist Preacher and whenever he sees me drinking, gambling, stealing, or murdering he says, he will write to Mother or my sister Annie, so I have to go straight... I send you ... [a photograph] of mine taken rough without my uniform. Does it look like me? I have my hair shaved so close now that I look like a penitentry bird. I have a sure thing that the Indians cannot get my scalp.

Your &c,
Sile